

True prayer quickens the soul without agitating it; as the river is most interesting when there is a ripple upon its surface to show that it is moving; as the sky is most beautiful when there is enough of breeze to clear away the mists and damps that have been exhaled from the earth, but no storm to disturb its serenity.

Prayer, when engaged in, in spirit and in truth, free from pride and the troublings of the passions, contains within itself its own answer, in the heavenly calm and repose which it communicates. Like every other good act, it is its own reward. When thus spread out before God, heaven itself seems to descend upon the soul, as we have seen the sky reflected on the bosom of a tranquil lake spread out beneath it. He who cultivates a devotional spirit is like the earth in its orbit, guided by a central power, and illuminated by a central light, and carrying every-where a circumambient atmosphere, with a life-giving and refreshing influence.

Some one illustrates the power of prayer by the case of a man in a small boat laying hold of a large ship; and who, if he does not seem to move the large vessel, at least moves the small vessel towards it. He would thus shew how prayer, even though it could not directly move God towards the suppliant, might yet move the suppliant towards God, and bring the two parties closer to each other.

This is truth, but not the whole truth. We fear that no one will be induced to pray for the mere pleasure of the prayer; nor from the hope, that though God is not moved by it, he himself may be improved. There would be an idea of illusion (not to say hypocrisy) accompanying this feeling, which must render the prayer, even if persevered in, powerless in its effects on the man himself, as well as upon God. On examining a sermon published by Dr. Leechman, in which he dwelt upon the power of prayer to render the wishes it expressed more ardent

and passionate. Hume remarked with great justice, "We can make use of no expression, or even thought, in prayers and entreaties, which does not imply that these prayers have an influence."* Prayer can accomplish the ends referred to by Leechman, only when it proceeds from a living faith in God, as at once the hearer and the answerer of prayer. In this respect there is a remarkable analogy between the influence of the

* Letter to Baron Mure, in Burton's Life of Hume.